

# EXHIBIT 5

# TIMES RECORD

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## **Narcan's importance grows as prescription drug abuse increases**

### **Sunday**

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Paramedics sweep into the residence, begin to assist the man and try to figure out what drugs he has taken.

As fast as possible, they administer two milligrams of Narcan, which begins to block the opiate receptors in the man's brain. Soon, he takes two breaths and his chance of surviving the overdose rises immediately. He is transported to a hospital for further care.

Narcan "will totally counteract the effects of a narcotic all at one time," Mike Hines, director of Southwest EMS in Crawford County, explained. "It's not going to hurt them because it just blocks those receptors that work with opiate drugs."

Fort Smith, like much of the rest of the country, is facing an epidemic of prescription medication abuse, and that means an epidemic of overdoses. Men, women, children of all ages -- paramedics say they've seen it all, and Narcan is their No. 1 weapon against lethal overdoses.

Narcan has relatively few side effects and can be administered through an IV line, through a tube in the trachea or leg, and as a nasal spray in some circumstances. That means even a longtime drug user with compromised veins can receive what some call a "miracle drug." Because Narcan acts in a limited way, it can be administered even when it is not clear what drug a patient took.

Narcan is an opiate antagonist. Known generically as naloxone, when Narcan is administered to someone who has overdosed on opioids -- a class of drugs that includes oxycodone, morphine and heroin -- it takes over the opiate receptors in the brain, essentially pushing the opiate out of the brain. It helps to restore normal breathing, even when the patient has used alcohol as well as drugs.

"When we're treating in the field, respiratory arrest is what we are treating to reverse," said Rick Rauser, program director at AirEvac Life Team 22 in Paris. "Their respiration will be depressed or completely seized, so we're treating respiratory arrests with Narcan."

"With narcotics, that's the biggest problem with those -- they'll make you quit breathing, and what people die from is respiratory arrest," Hines said.

Fort Smith EMS Director Tim Hearn said the same protocol is used in Fort Smith.

"Part of our protocol is when we can't figure out why they're unconscious, and we're not able to wake them up, depending on their airway status and stuff, we'll use Narcan to see if we can wake them up. If there's not something that points to they've taken an opiate, maybe like an empty bottle laying around, we can use Narcan and see if it will wake them up," Hearn said.

"We're going to manage their airway first and foremost. We are going to make sure we can manage and protect their airway, and if they're having issues managing their airway, we want to reverse anything we can that can be reversed," Hearn said.

Although the antidote has been around since the late 1970s, awareness of Narcan is growing locally as opiate overdoses increase in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

In Arkansas between 2013 and 2014, the number deaths from drug overdose increased by 13.5 percent, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC reports 675 Arkansans died of drug overdoses during this period. During the same years, Oklahoma saw a 1.5 percent decrease in fatal drug overdoses, according to the CDC. However, totaling 1,567, Oklahoma's drug overdose deaths were nearly double the number reported in Arkansas.

In 2012, health-care providers in Arkansas wrote 116 opiate prescriptions per 100 people, according to the Arkansas Center For Health Improvement.

In Fort Smith, which has a few more than 86,000 residents, Fort Smith EMS responded to more than 50 or 60 opiate overdoses in 2015, Hearn said. In Crawford County, with more than 61,600 residents, Hines said, "We probably administer Narcan at least 10 times a month."

Because Fort Smith has two easily accessed hospitals, many times people are transported for care without alerting EMS.

"Do I think it's an epidemic? Do I think it's a big deal?" Hines asked. "Absolutely. Medication abuse I think that it's more of an issue now probably ... than ever has been with medications."

Rauser added, "Especially with opioids."

The most commonly overdosed opioids are methadone, oxycodone and hydrocodone, according to the CDC.

The three drugs are hot on the black market, authorities say. Charges ranged from possession to possession with intent to deliver or sell to fraudulently obtaining a prescription.

"Another thing we see too is folks selling their pain medication ... or people will doctor-hop to get more pain pills to sell or take," Hines said.

Perhaps worse, Rauser said, his crew has treated children for an opioid overdose after they have gotten into Grandma's purse, found pills and -- thinking they were candy -- took them.

Authorities at the Sebastian County Sheriff's Office and other area law enforcement agencies recommend those who take medication to lock it to prevent others from obtaining it.

There is a worldwide epidemic of opiate overdoses and deaths, which is especially prevalent in the United States. The majority of those deaths are related not to heroin, but instead to prescription drugs, according to the CDC. Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental deaths in the U.S.

Although Narcan has positive outcomes, paramedics say the antidote can have side effects, including chest pains, allergic reactions and negative outcomes for some patients who wake up to find they've lost their high and, in some cases, feel severe pain.

The latter problem can cause trouble for paramedics.

"The thing we have to worry about in a drug-abuse society is if we wake them completely up (when using Narcan), they might be pretty upset with you," Hearn said. "And it's hard for a lot of people to think in that perception, but they'll be upset that you've ruined their high. So you've ruined their high, and they're angry. They may even look at it like you've stolen or taken away something from them."

Narcan is available over the counter, without a prescription in 37 states, including Arkansas. Pharmacists at local drug stores, including Walgreen's, CVS Pharmacy, Anderson's Discount Pharmacy and National Family Pharmacy, say they have the antidote available and prices vary depending on whether the customer has insurance and what form of the antidote is sold. However, at Anderson's Discount Pharmacy, pharmacists said those interested in obtaining the antidote must have a prescription, whereas consumers at popular chains, including Walgreen's and CVS, have the option to purchase the antidote without a prescription.

Paramedics encourage residents to purchase the antidote as a safety measure because not all first responders in the greater Fort Smith area have access to Narcan. Local police and firefighters say they don't have the antidote on hand.

"Cities in the nation are looking at law enforcement and other first responders, including firefighters, to be able to carry, to have Narcan with them because sometimes, they aren't in close proximity to where they need to be to make the difference they need to make, but Narcan could help that," Hearn said.

Pharmacists say they encourage residents who may be concerned about loved ones or who want to play it safe to purchase the antidote, which typically costs \$40-\$50 per dose. When administered quickly and properly, Narcan may eliminate the possibility of a death.

Narcan is an auto-injector, which is like an Epi-pen, said Thomas Wofford, staff pharmacist at National Family Pharmacy. However costs for those are usually more, Hines said.

Wofford also stressed the importance of the antidote and said there's a local need. He said, "In my honest opinion, it will be for sale in every state within two years."

The bottom line is, opioid overdose is a national epidemic and a leading cause of unintentional death in the nation, according to the CDC.

Statistics from the CDC show that in 2014, there were nearly 50,000 drug overdoses compared to fewer than 32,500 vehicle fatalities. That same year, opioid overdoses were the leading cause of accidental drug-related deaths, with prescription drugs accounting for 8,000 more overdoses than heroin.

The number of opioid prescriptions has nearly tripled during the past 20 years, according to a report from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. In 2014, nearly 2 million out of 21.5 million Americans answered in a national survey given by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration that they abused or were dependent on prescription opioids.

Nationally in 2014, opioids were involved in 60.8 percent of lethal drug overdoses in 2014, quadrupling in number since 2000, according to the CDC.

"It's those therapeutic drugs like opiates, those drugs that people need. They're out there, and they're so commonly being abused. People are taking too much," Rauser said.

